

Vendor Questions for the Technical Assistance RFP Meeting

- 1) Q: Are there MBE sub-goals?
A: No, there are no MBE sub-goals.
- 2) Q: How long does it take for a contractor to become MBE certified?
A: The certification process used to take from three to six months but it's our understanding that the process has been shortened. For specific information about the MBE certification process visit the Office of Minority Business website:
http://www.mdot.state.md.us/MBE_Program/Index.html
- 3) Q: Is there a limit on the length of the executive summary?
A: No, there is no limit on the length of the executive summary. However, keep in mind that it is suppose to be a summary so it should be somewhat limited in length.
- 4) Q: Will the contract rates be re-evaluated at any time in the contract (perhaps for annual pay raises, as an example)?
A: No, the contract rates will not be reevaluated. You should build in pay raises and other increasing costs in the fully loaded rates. The fully loaded rates will stay the same over the entire length of the contract.
- 5) Q: Should resumes be submitted for every person who will work on the contract or just one sample per category?
A: Resumes should be submitted for every person who will work on the contract. If someone leaves your organization and a new person needs to be added after the contract is awarded, the MEA project manager will need to approve the resume of the new contractor staff member.
- 6) Q: How will indirect costs be covered? For instance, if a color pamphlet needs to be printed, it is impossible to know at this time if 100,000 copies or 1,000,000 copies need to be made, making it difficult to build these costs into the fully loaded rate.

A: Foreseeable indirect costs (such as travel) should be included in the fully loaded direct rate. Some tasks may require the purchase of related materials. Material supplies above and beyond what is required for normal business operations must be provided to MEA in the form of a cost estimate. The contractor will use the task order process to request permission to purchase or produce these materials.
- 7) Q: For the grants and loans programs, are we expected to serve as a technical resource or to help process the grants and loans?
A: The technical assistance contractor will serve as a technical resource, helping to verify the expected energy savings submitted by the grant and/or loan applicant.
- 8) Q: How many grant applicants do you expect?

A: In 2009, there were over 100 applicants for about \$4.5 million in EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities grants. In 2010, there will be \$3.2 million in grants available under the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities grant program. Because the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities program is a voluntary program, MEA is unable to know the exact number of grant applicants that will come in during 2010.

Under the EECBG grant program, 160 counties, cities, and towns are eligible to receive sub-grants from MEA.

9) Q: What type of marketing do you expect to do for the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities grant program?

A: MEA plans on leveraging the MEA email newsletter, community meetings, and the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations to advertise this program. We do not expect the tech assistance contractor to assist in marketing this program during FY 2010.

10) Q: Is there a matching requirement on the EECBG program?

A: No, there is no matching requirement.

11) Q: What type of audit is required under the EECBG program?

A: The audit length will depend on the magnitude of the MEA grant. We do not expect these audits to be investment grade audits but the audits do need to be sufficient to help local governments identify the most effective energy measures for their specific facility.

12) Q: For the DHCD multifamily programs, who will be creating the task orders: MEA or DHCD?

A: MEA will be writing the task orders.

13) Q: Does the Buy American provision apply to the appliance program?

A: No, to MEA's knowledge the Buy American provision only applies to ARRA projects on government buildings and public works.

14) Q: Besides the utilities possibly being involved, how does MEA envision the financial handling of rebates to consumers? For example, will the contractor be expected to pay rebates and get reimbursed by the State or will an escrow account be set up that the contractor has signature authority over or will the contractor be given incremental "retainers" to pay out rebates?

A: We will post an answer to this question shortly.

15) Q: If the utilities run the appliance rebate program, how much of the \$5.4 million will the Tech Assistance contractor be responsible for?

A: The RFP Task indicates that the Contractor should be able to provide the resources to implement a portion of the rebate program or the full amount. We have proposed that the utilities will implement approximately 97% of the program. Until DOE

approves the program and the utilities have signed contracts, MEA can't be certain of the final implementation design. 2.67% of Maryland is not served by an electric utility currently participating in the EmPOWER Maryland program. If the electric utilities participating in EmPOWER Maryland program distribute the appliance rebates in their service territories, MEA's technical assistance contractor will be responsible for serving the remaining 2.67% of Maryland's population. The administrative cost for the Appliance Rebate program has been capped at 20%.

16) Q: How do you get certified as a MBE?

A: Certification is run through the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). Additional information can be found on the MDOT website at http://www.mdot.state.md.us/MBE_Program/overview.

To be eligible as a MBE, your firm must be certified in the classifications being sought through this RFP.

17) Q: What does "Maryland certified" mean?

A: To be "Maryland certified", a contractor must be a MBE certified by the State of Maryland. A MBE contractor's offices can be located in another State (i.e. Virginia, DC) but still receive Maryland MBE certification.

18) Q: Can you estimate the MBE graduation rate?

A: Graduation is defined as the removal of a firm's eligibility to be certified as an MBE/DBE based upon its having met or exceeded the small business size standards applicable to one or more of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Codes in which the firm is certified. A contractor must be MBE eligible on the date of the proposal submission. For specific information, check the Office of Minority Business website: http://www.mdot.state.md.us/MBE_Program/Index.html

19) Q: What is needed on the insurance certificate?

A: An insurance certificate must be provided with the proposal. Maryland must be a named participant on the insurance certificate.

20) Is there a formula for calculating how a firm's proposal is evaluated (technical versus financial)?

A: There is no set formula but technical outweighs financials and financials outweigh economic benefits to Maryland. For example, if the #1 technical proposal and the #2 technical proposal are close on technical merit but the #2 technical proposal is much cheaper, the #2 technical proposal is likely to be chosen.

21) Q: If there are two companies working together on this proposal and one has higher rates for the same position, how should they merge rates?

A: The contractor will need to blend the differences in rates into their fully loaded rate for that position. MEA needs to be provided with one rate for each position listed in the RFP.

- 22) Q: If a prime vendor submits with another company as a team and the partner company is a MBE, can the partner company be considered a MBE subcontractor?
A: Yes. The partner company's information should be submitted on the MBE subcontractor form.
- 23) Q: Is exceeding the MBE goal a discriminator?
A: Exceeding the MBE goal would be considered as an economic benefit to Maryland. A proposal is evaluated first on technical merit, then financial merit, and finally using the economic benefits to Maryland- exceeding the MBE goal would come into play at this point in the evaluation process.
- 24) Q: Will the State of Maryland look at MBE performance on existing contracts?
A: As part of the proposal, applicants must include a list of State contracts that they have been awarded over the last few years. As part of this process, MEA can follow-up on how the existing contracts are progressing, including performance against the MBE goal.
- 25) Q: Is this an old or new contract?
A: This is a new contract.
- 26) Q: If you have multiple MBE subcontractors, do you submit a budget sheet for each one?
A: No, you should submit one budget sheet showing all MBE contractors. On the budget sheet, you must list each MBE contractor and the percentage of the contract that each MBE contractor will receive. All of the percentages must add up to a minimum of 25% to meet the MBE goal for this program.
- 27) Q: How do the funds get spend under this RFP?
A: Programs funded through the Strategic Energy Investment Funds (SEIF) must be spent by the end of the fiscal year. For example, FY 2010 SEIF funds must be spent by June 30th, the end of the State's fiscal year. ARRA funds must be spent over a three year period but there is pressure to get the funds moving as soon as possible in order to stimulate the economy and preserve jobs.
- 28) Q: Does Task #6 "Installation Contractor Support" pertain to single-family housing, multifamily housing, and/or commercial buildings?
A: Task 6 applies to all types of buildings but is likely to focus mainly on multifamily housing.
- 29) Q: Under Section 4.4.10 "Economic Benefit to Maryland", much of the narrative and quantitative benefits requested depend on the budget assign to the potential work and the breakdown between labor and expenses. Will MEA provide the budget for each task by labor and expenses (e.g., incentives) by year? If not, how does MEA want bidders to calculate their response to this requirement? One suggestion is that MEA give all bidders an overall labor and expense totals to use

(for each year or over the 3-1/2 period) prefacing that these totals are for bidding purpose only and may not represent actual funding.

A: Because there is no guarantee of any level of usage under this contract, in providing the information required in this section, the Offeror should state its level of commitment per \$100,000 of contract value. In other words, for each \$100,000 of contract value, state how many Maryland jobs will be created, what Maryland tax revenue will be generated, how much will be paid to Maryland subcontractors, etc.

30) Q: MEA's FY 2010 Program Booklet gives some idea of possible funding for the work falling to the winning Technical Services Manager contractor team; although, it is hard to cross-walk some of the activities between the Booklet and the RFP and out-year funding is not addressed in the Booklet. In lieu of a budget for each task, on what basis does MEA suggest bidders propose their technical approaches?

A: Interested applicants should look at the MEA 2010 program book and the MEA website to get an idea of the budgets involved in each program.

31) Q: For Task 9 "Building Code Assistance," it is not clear whether MEA wants the contractor to only assist in scoping out an action plan or also to do the implementation (and whether training is the role of Technical Service Manager.) This is critical to know to develop a responsive technical approach.

A: The contractor should plan to provide resources to both develop and action plans and be prepared to provide implementation resources as requested through the task order process.

32) Q: When MEA states that travel expenses will not be reimbursed, is this limited to local travel or does it exclude long-distance travel reimbursement as well?

A: No travel expenses will be reimbursed. All travel should be factored in to the fully loaded, fixed hourly rates.

33) Q: Will General and Accounting (G&A) handling fees for Other Direct Costs (ODCs) be allowed?

A: No, all G&A handling fees need to be included in the fully-loaded, fixed hourly rates.

34) Q: Can other personnel labor classifications be proposed as the contractor sees necessary?

A: No, only the personnel labor classifications listed in the RFP can be included.

35) Q: Can multiple staff be proposed to share one position (e.g., two people devoting partial time to the position of Customer Service Specialist)?

A: Yes.

36) Q: Is the proposed Project Manager required to have PMP certification?

A: No, PMP certification is not required.

37) Q: The solicitation requests that submissions are in MS Word format. Does the State have a preference for which version of MS Word they should be compatible with (e.g., Word 1997-2003 .doc; Word 2007 .docx)?

A: Please submit the document in Word 1997-2003.

38) Q: Will the Maryland Energy Administration consider making other direct costs (expenses) reimbursable at cost (plus a reasonable General & Accounting fee proposed by the bidder), as opposed to being lumped into labor rates? Our experience in just assisting MEA with the administration of the Maryland Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program is that expenses can be significant (e.g., including significant amounts of travel, marketing and recruitment expenses, materials production, reporting incentives, web site hosting expenses, and much more.) Such expenses would be nearly impossible to fully project and incorporate into labor rates.

39) A: General & Accounting fees may not be included. A cost estimate must be provided. Some tasks may require the purchase of related materials. Material supplies above and beyond what is required for normal business operations must be provided to MEA in the form of a cost estimate. The contractor will use the task order process to request permission to purchase or produce these materials.

40) Q: Will you accept proposals for a portion of the tasks listed in the Energy Efficiency Technical Services Manager document?

A: No.